



NRC NEWS

UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION II

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NRC SENDS AUGMENTED INSPECTION TEAM TO ILLINOIS FUEL PLANT AND ISSUES CONFIRMATORY ACTION LETTER

Following a chemical release (uranium hexafluoride) early Monday (December 22) morning at the Honeywell International nuclear fuel processing plant near Metropolis, Illinois, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission began dispatching inspectors to the facility. Those inspectors are now part of a formal group designated as an Augmented Inspection Team or AIT.

An AIT is formed to review the circumstances surrounding more significant events at NRC-licensed facilities. The Honeywell AIT is being led by Jay Henson from the NRC's Region II office in Atlanta and the rest of the team is made up of three additional Region II inspectors and one inspector from NRC headquarters in Rockville, Maryland.

The AIT will review the event and assess the plant operators' performance as well as the plant equipment involved. The inspection team will also review Honeywell's procedures, the company's response to the events and any investigations or reviews by the company. The AIT will conduct an exit meeting to announce the preliminary results of the inspection at a time to be announced later and a final publicly-available report will be issued within 30 days of the inspection.

In addition to the AIT inspection, the NRC has issued a Confirmatory Action Letter to Honeywell to confirm that the company has shut down uranium hexafluoride operations, initiated its own investigation and will discuss with the NRC both the results of that investigation and proposed corrective actions prior to restarting the processes involved in the incident.

The issuance of the Confirmatory Action Letter does not preclude the NRC from taking additional steps, including enforcement actions, for any violations of NRC requirements that may be identified during the AIT inspection or any subsequent inspections.

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